

Hit The Beach!

The Southern California ASL Club Newsletter



October 2004 Volume 9 Number 3

The President's Corner

by Jim Aikens

I returned recently from the Granddaddy of ASL events, the ASL Oktoberfest (ASLOK), in Cleveland. I'm pleased to report that our Club was well represented, with members Rob Feinstein, Eric Johnson, Herman Frettlöhr, Chas Argent and myself in attendance, plus two members-in-exile: Ray Wolozyń and Steve Dethlefsen. It was a pleasure to spend time with each of these guys, plus my other ASLOK friends from around the world that I see each year. If you've never been to this event, it is well worth the effort. Mark Nixon and his crew do an outstanding job.

Thanks to the hard work of our Playtest Team and our Melee Pack production team, we were able to release Melee Pack II at ASLOK. The packs went out the door like gangbusters; in only three days we sold over 80 Melee Pack II's, and another 20 Melee Pack I's. I heard nothing but rave reviews from those attendees who played our scenarios. And let me tell you, praise from the Grogards who attend ASLOK is high praise indeed. On behalf of the Club, I want to thank our designers, playtesters and production team for putting together a product that is a real credit to our Club.

Well, the holidays are rapidly approaching, a time that is usually slow for ASL activity. Originally, we had planned to hold some small playtest days in November. However, our intrepid playtesters, after their tremendous effort to produce Melee Pack II, asked for a breather, and who can blame them. So instead of the small playtest days, we've organized a Fall One Day event for December 4th at the Thompson Irish Dance Studio. This event will see the return of a tried-and-true format, the North South Challenge. The theme will be "Let it Snow!". All the nominated scenarios must have snow (ground, falling, deep, whatever) to qualify. It's going to be a great time, and as always, its free for members, including soda and beer.

Also, I want to point out that West Coast Melee VIII is less than three months away, believe it or not. Be sure to keep February 3rd - 6th open. As always, we have a great program in the works.

I hope to see you all at the "Let it Snow!" North-South Challenge.

President@socalasl.com

Marching Orders

by Matt Cicero

And now for something completely different...

When Melee Pack I was published we pulled together a few pages of Design Notes to compliment that Pack's scenarios. At the time, the Design Notes took about 4 pages or so of newsletter space and so we had plenty of room left for more standard newsletter articles. With the release of Melee Pack II, things went a different direction.

The Design Notes for Melee Pack II are a surprising 11 pages...quite an improvement over Melee Pack I. I can attribute this to two factors. First, we finished off the Design Notes shortly after finishing off the Pack. That meant that the scenarios were still fresh in our minds...funny, you'd think that we would have done it this way the first time! The second reason for the length of the Notes was a change in the format. I asked our designers to produce Design Notes that covered three main issues: inspiration and development of the scenario, rules clarifications and tactical considerations. I'm happy to say that the final results turned out pretty terrific.

Although the Design Notes take up most of the space in this issue, I did manage to squeeze in a few other things. We are start-

ing to work on Melee Pack III already and I thought a quick article about scenario submissions and our hopeful playtest schedule were in order. I also shoe-horned in the Battlefield Integrity values for Melee Pack II...something that should have been included on the scenario cards but never made it. There is also a pair of "save the date" announcements...one for our upcoming One-Day Event and the other for West Coast Melee VIII. Our next One-Day will be based on the North-South Challenge format so start submitting your favorite snowy scenarios to the List! The WCM VIII note is there to remind everyone that we are only three months away from the west coast's premier ASL Tournament! Finally, I couldn't resist a great *Sweet...Ouch!* sent in by Sean Geraghty...a terrific capper for this issue.

Enjoy and see you next issue where we'll be looking over BRT!

Editor@socalasl.com



Melee Pack III: The Hunt Begins *by Matt Cicero*

Melee Pack II has hit the stands and we are very pleased and proud to have that effort finally put to bed. Grab one if you haven't already! They're easy to order on our website: www.socalasl.com

Despite the long haul on Melee Pack II, the SoCal ASL Playtest Team is already setting its sights on our next effort: Melee Pack III. We already have a few scenarios in the hopper but we are on the hunt for more. So before I mention anything about our playtest effort for the next year, let me send out the most important message of all:

SUBMIT A SCENARIO!!

We love new ideas, and we know there are plenty of those out there waiting to see the light of day. We also hope you'll jump on-board the team and help us playtest.

We've posted some rules about scenario submission on our website but I thought I'd summarize things here to make things easy.

Scenario Submission Guidelines:

1) Submissions should be scenarios that have been played through at LEAST once by the designer.

THIS IS CRITICAL.

- 2) Submissions must be a Word/Text file.
- 3) Submissions must be original work and cannot have been given to any other agency previously.
- 4) Submissions become the property of SoCal ASL and therefore cannot be submitted elsewhere once submitted to SoCal ASL.

Playtesting for Melee Pack III will be, we hope, even more organized and exciting than for our previous efforts. Figuring that our process isn't broken, we aren't going to mess with it too much. Primarily, we hope to simply focus our Playtest Team efforts a bit more and to communicate more frequently. The first part of that idea is a simple schedule. Trying to predict when scenarios are ready for publishing is a bit like herding cats. So take the following schedule with a grain of salt while using it as a guideline for your/our efforts.

Playtest Team Schedule for Melee Pack III:

March 31, 2005

Deadline for scenario submissions to be considered for Melee Pack III.

April 30, 2005

Scenario List for Melee Pack II finalized by Playtest Team vote.

August 31, 2005

Scenarios, completed and balanced, are submitted for layout and proofing.

September 30, 2005

Final production runs for Melee pack III.

As you can see, this schedule would keep us on track for an ASLOK release date. We'll see how things work out. Meanwhile, we're off and running...hope you'll join us for some great design and playtest fun!



WCM VIII **February 3-6, 2005**

The West Coast's biggest ASL event is just three months away and we wanted to give you a little nudge to...

SAVE THE DATE !!

That's right, it's time to begin the pleading. For some, the begging. For others, the bribing. For me, the major sucking up. Yup, time to start greasing the wheels with the significant others, guys, cause you know those last minute efforts go largely unheeded or incur unreasonable costs. It's time to think hard about those holiday gifts. It's time to make sure YOU suggest a holiday visit with your in-laws. It's time to send your lovely out for "Girls' Night" at least twice while you stay home and duct tape the kids to the wall, uh, er...baby-sit. My personal favorite is the "unexpected spavist for my wife and her mother". Oh, yeah...gonna strike early and hard this year and come February, it's all about WCM for me!

Starting now will give you an excellent leg up when it comes time to ask for that three day weekend away in early February. Record all your good deeds...memorize them for the inevitable, unreasonable resistance you will face. And then triumphantly parade them out with only a token whine, snivel or grovel to seal the deal.

Time to gear up, boys, for another three month campaign! To Victory! To WCM!!

Look for Pre-Registration Packs late November!

Fall "Let It Snow!" North-South Challenge

Well you all heard the man...regional playtests OUT and the North-South Challenge is IN on December 4th!!

We haven't had a N-S Challenge in a while so I thought I'd take a moment to jog your memories. In the past, the Club split itself into two factions, roughly by geography. Some guys fought on the wrong side, however, claiming that they were "born" in the other region or that they "lived" there longer...or because we had uneven sides and needed to shift a few folks. Once sides were settled, the players sat down to the scenario and played with equal numbers of guys from each team playing each side of the scenario. The side winning the most games was given the N-S Trophy and bragging rights. The scenario we play will be determined by the membership. Over the next few weeks, folks are encouraged to send in their recommendation. The only considerations for scenario choices are: 1) it must be thematic...that is, it must in some way contain Snow; 2) it should be a sizable scenario...yeah, we can play a short one but the N-S Challenge was usually a one-scenario-day affair; and 3) it should be relatively balanced. So get your scenario suggestions posted to the List!

This fall we will again be gathering at the **Thompson Irish Dance Studio thanks to the benevolence of Sean and his wife, Cecily. Bring a chair!!! I'll be totting in a box of Melee Pack IIs for everyone and I will also have some goodies folks have ordered from Alex. Not sure what yet but I'll mail you when we get closer to the event. Oh and we'll have all the beverages handled, compliments of the Club.**

See you all there!

Date/Time: December 4, 2004
Starts at 9:00 AM
Address: 3890 Prospect Ave #D
Yorba Linda, CA 92886
Phone: (714) 528-7335
Note: Members Free.
Non-Members \$5.

MELEE PACK II: DESIGN NOTES



An Overview of Melee Pack II by Matt Cicero

We were a bunch of Proud Papas when Melee Pack I was finished in time for WCM VI in 2003. We were even more proud when folks let us know that they really liked MP I. It gave us the kind of morale boost that insures that you will run right out and try harder on the next project...to make sure it would be even better than MP I.

Straight out of the gate we were pumping a lot of energy into Melee Pack II. Designers cranked out a ton of new scenarios. Playtesters jumped on those creations with a vengeance. Nearly every One-Day event the Club sponsored had folks playtesting several of the new scenarios. It really was a major effort with a lot of excitement. And the scenarios we had to choose from were really fun and interesting.

As WCM VII approached, we found that we had created a small problem for ourselves. We had spread our playtesting efforts out a bit too thin. Instead of having our target number of six scenarios nearing completion, we had eight scenarios in the hopper with only one ready for publishing. Yikes! To make matters even more interesting, the scenarios for Melee Pack II were generally medium to large affairs...not so easy to knock off playtests when a good half day was needed to play a scenario through. To focus our efforts, we culled the eight scenarios to six in a difficult playtester vote that everyone agreed should have been done a few months earlier. One of the many lessons we learned this past year and a half.

Despite heroic efforts, the holiday season and the size of the scenarios conspired to keep us from our goal of a WCM VII release date. We toyed with a May 2004 release date but ultimately felt that ASLOK 2004 would prove a more likely target. Another half year and several rounds of scenario iterations would pass before we were able to lock down the remaining five scenarios. I think nearly all of the playtest team was looking a little glassy-eyed at that point...and most could probably recite from memory the information on each of the scenario cards. The funny part was that despite our intimacy with these scenarios, we still made it through production with a few "oopsies" on the cards. Go figure!

Well, the rest is history. ASLOK 2004 saw our release of Melee Pack II (and the emergency shipment of replacement cards to correct a glaring error). It was a nice finish to a very long effort.

All that was left was for me to round up our designers and squeeze out of them a few Design Notes for inclusion in this newsletter. It may have taken a little while to accomplish that, but I think the wait was well worth it. Over the next few pages I've gathered the extended Design Notes for the six scenarios within Melee Pack II. We've organized these notes into roughly two sections: 1) a discussion about the inspiration and development of each scenario; and 2) a discussion about the forces involved and their relative strengths and weaknesses.



Guerra En La Selva [MP7] Notes by Rob Stai / Matt Cicero

Background and Development

Guerra En La Selva (which translates as "war in the jungle") was inspired by a small article in the LA Times back in 1995, when Peru and Ecuador were again fighting over their border. That article made reference to earlier fighting, back in 1941. Since I've always had a taste for the more "esoteric" scenarios, I saw a golden opportunity here. *Guerra* first made its debut at a So Cal ASL Club event, a one day affair called the PTO challenge. Not much was done with it until years later, when Matt Romey finally nudged me enough to submit it for further development.

The scenario didn't change all that much during playtesting...minor changes to the OBs to tweak the play balance and the overlay was added to make the Peruvian right flank a valid attack route. The action represents the initial Peruvian invasion, trying to cover as much ground as possible, while leaving the attacking force reasonably intact.

Be aware that both sides are treated as Axis Minors for all game purposes, even though the Ecuadoreans use the Italian counter mix. An Ecuadorean 336 that battle hardens becomes a 347, not a 346 as an Italian would. Both sides also suffer Captured Use penalties when using an opponent's SW.

Players should also be aware that the jungle hexes are Dense Jungle. This will much more severely restrict the available LOS, will negate Bypass and will reduce stacking limits.

This was my first official attempt at scenario design, and I hope everyone enjoys it as much as our Club did while playtesting it!



The Ecuadoreans

Strengths: TEM, Rout Terrain

Weaknesses: Broad Front, Firepower, Numbers

The Ecuadoreans must decide the best way to defend a rather broad front. The Peruvians have enough squads to press an attack on opposite ends of the playing area so some attention must be given to the flanks. What makes this effort more difficult is the fact that despite having access to paths, repositioning troops from one side of the board to the other is still very slow. The trick is to position enough troops to slow the Peruvian advance so that reinforcements can slide over in time. That means some very creative positioning of squads and especially the two MGs. In general, our playtesters found that Peruvians moving up through the Dense Jungle in the west were slowed enough to allow reinforcements to arrive. That left the major effort of slowing assaulting Peruvians for troops covering the east. Firelanes and judicious use of residual were the orders of the day.

The Ecuadorean enjoys the benefits of the terrain more so than the Peruvians. Ecuadoreans get the comfortable +2 terrain from buildings and Dense Jungle in the east where the Peruvians can

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only hope that the Kunai and Palm Trees will save them. In the west, the Ecuadoreans will almost always get the first shot at the advancing Peruvians and, if they are careful, it may even be against non-concealed units. That can be a nasty 12+1 shot for the Peruvians to swallow in several key hexes. With no Fire Groups in the Dense Jungle, such blasts can really take the teeth out of an assault. One last note to mention is the availability of rout paths. The Ecuadoreans and Peruvians both benefit in the jungle. In the east, however, it is the Ecuadoreans who can remain effective while the Peruvians try to make themselves look small in the more open ground.

The Ecuadorean troops are at a severe disadvantage in numbers and firepower. 9 squads to 15 with 27 FP versus 50 FP from squads alone. Given the need for the Peruvians to hustle, this disadvantage is somewhat lessened as the Peruvians will likely be shooting a great deal in the AFPh. The major drawback for the Ecuadorean firepower, however, is the 3 FP squads. That extra FP makes a big difference at range and may encourage Ecuadoreans to wait till they see the whites of their eyes before dropping concealment to fire.

Ecuadorean defenders have usually tried to delay the Peruvian advance in order to scratch out the victory and if that didn't seem to be working, they went for the CVP Cap. Last minute leaps into CC and attempts to capture conscripts were common. Overall, the Ecuadoreans must set up wisely or they may not be able to recover in time to win. An aggressive Peruvian may try to run through the defenders at top speed, hoping to avoid the inevitable rush of reinforcements. If that rush never materializes or is too slow, the dance is over.



The Peruvians

Strengths: 15 Squads
Weaknesses: Game Length, CVP Cap

The Peruvian horde is set to overwhelm the thin Ecuadorean line. There are enough troops to get the job done but can it be accomplished in time and without losing too many men? The Peruvians have several choices available for breaking through to victory. The Dense Jungle in the west is very tempting with its +2 TEM and its abundant rout terrain. The more open ground to the east is also tempting thanks to the rapid advance that is possible here. The center is tempting thanks to the 1.5 modifier to EVP for troops exiting up the middle. Wiley Peruvians can use any approach or even split his forces and attempt more than one...there are enough squads.

Another thing to think about is how best to achieve the VP necessary for victory. Yes, exiting troops will win the day, though you'll need a lot of troops exited to hit the goal. Capturing buildings helps, especially if L3 looks weakly held...just be sure that no Ecuadoreans are in position to snatch these back before Game End. Finally, there are prisoners. Yup, this is one of those scenarios where taking prisoners may just be the best way to win. Exit those guys and they are worth 4 EVP each! Makes you want to hunt down conscripts...

Two things will ruin your day faster than anything else...time and the CVP Cap. You have 5 turns to move off the board. That means you have to average only 2 hexes per turn. Of course, much of the terrain you are crossing is 2 MF...so moving normally only gets you 3 hexes per turn. Breaking can mean you just won't have the time to recover and exit. However, breaking

may be far more preferable to dying. Losing 12 CVP ends the game immediately so caution in open terrain is recommended. Also, those conscripts that make up a nice piece of your fire-power edge are just asking to be captured if they should stick their necks out too far in any terrain. Finally, it should be mentioned that several games have been lost on the final turn with a timely PIN result...it can be that close, especially if that squad happened to be carrying the Ecuadorean Prisoners.

Peruvian firepower may not be as instrumental in winning at first. You have ground to cover and the Dense Jungle/Palm Trees/Kunai limits LOS. Still, long range fire group shots in the open may get lucky and take out a key defender. Use that MMG to cut off reinforcements in the middle board. Once you get up close, make sure to minimize the resid you walk through and maximize target selection limits on Ecuadorean Subsequent Fire. The best assaults have used half squads to limit Ecuadorean choices and remove concealment. Hammer each target in order to break and hold open a section of the line, then hustle through with your troops and prisoners. I found CC was worthwhile versus conscripts but was too chancy against other troops...remember, Peruvians have a CVP Cap, not the other way around.

Unlike the Ecuadoreans, the Peruvians have a more forgiving battle plan to execute. You have enough troops to recover from a misstep and carry on. You have enough choices to achieve victory that you can afford to change midstream and still win.



Crater Lake [MP8] Notes by Robert Feinstein

Background and Development

The inspiration for Crater Lake came while researching my favorite ASL vehicle, the British Armoured Vehicle Royal Engineers (AVRE). The AVRE has great armor, a huge 200mm PF-like MA, plenty of SMOKE, MGs, and toys like fascines and 4 inherent DCs. Although the AVRE is slow and has no AP, it is of great use (and great fun) in any OoB that includes longer-range anti-tank assets. The Chapter H Vehicle Notes for the AVRE look daunting at first but in fact the many special AVRE rules are all fairly simple. However, you must read the AVRE rules in order to make creative and effective use of these powerful weapons.

I came across a website documenting the 1976 extraction of an AVRE just beyond Mike Sector of Juno Beach. The story of this particular AVRE is fascinating and to me seemed like a perfect starting point for a tournament-size scenario. Basically, Churchills (AVREs and Bridgelayers - see Chapter H British Vehicle Notes 36 "BRIDGE" section and 37 for the Churchill AVRE and Fascines) were tasked with filling in a bombed-out road through a flooded coastal area on D-Day to aid Sherman DD tanks in moving inland.

The first AVRE to drop a fascine bundle into the flooded crater instead ended up sliding into the crater, submerged up to its turret. The crew escaped but 3 of the 6 were killed by German mortar fire just after exiting the crater. Once reinforcements were sent forward, they ended up laying bridge units over the AVRE

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and then completed the span by filling in the remaining gap with debris from anti-tank obstacles. After the first few Shermans crossed the bridge mid-morning, the bridge became dislodged and required reinforcement, thereby sealing the AVRE's fate. Eventually, the AVRE was completely paved over and hidden from view until 1976 when it was disinterred and restored. It is now on display nearby.

I found an aerial photograph of the site, annotated in French. This provided everything I needed to come up with a board configuration that provided the same tactical situation of having to get across a flooded stream and/or deal with another nearby bridge that was mined. After researching the OoB for each side, the first version of Crater Lake was created. This version had flooded streams and an SSR that forced the Canadian player to bridge the crater and/or use the mined bridge, and it included both Bridgelayers and AVREs. Allowing the German to dictate which bridge is mined vs. cratered provided more defensive options and greater replay potential. However, playtesting soon revealed this to be a rather one-dimensional scenario with few Canadian options and an almost guaranteed Allied defeat if the bridgelaying failed.

Fellow SoCal ASL Club members Bryan Earll, Eric Johnson and Ray Woloszyn were instrumental in revamping the scenario to allow for more strategic and tactical options for both sides. It was pointed out that the Canadians usually chose to span the crater. But there were other options such as crossing the stream elsewhere or using the mined bridge. So we tried a Deep Stream and Soft Ground, thereby giving the Canadian tanks and infantry far more options and the fascines greater significance. These changes survived seven subsequent rounds of revision.



The Germans

Strengths: VC, Numerous Anti-Tank Assets
Weaknesses: Thin Defensive Line

The key to this scenario as the German is to cover the mined and cratered bridges with MGs and mortars but also try to defend in depth towards the exit area. If you set up too close to the stream, the Canadian firepower will be overwhelming. If you don't cover the bridges, the Canadian force will get across intact and likely prove unstoppable. But if you can hold them off for a turn or two, your precious tanks can get into position. Another big decision for the German player is what to do with the first tank on Turn 2. Although plugging a gap seems very tempting, a lone tank is no match for a horde of swarming Shermans. Holding back and waiting for the second tank that enters on Turn 3 is generally a good idea, depending on the urgency of the situation. The German PSK also presents a formidable threat, especially when hunkered down in a trench next to a bunker. When all else fails, line up those remaining infantry and start firing PFs.

Apart from the German tanks, the AT Gun and 81mm mortars are key to the German defense. The mortars are best used to kill infantry and threaten tanks before they have crossed the stream. They are also very effective when used to place Smoke on top of AVREs or other Canadian hardpoints. In contrast, a shrewd German player may choose to place his AT Gun with the end-game in mind. The southeast portion of the map is awash in concealment terrain and the Shermans have to come through there sooner or later. On the other hand, placing the AT Gun towards the north ensures good flank and rear shots against the Canadian tanks, though the Gun may be quickly overrun by Canadian

infantry if it is not provided sufficient protection. Another issue is the German's placement of pillboxes. Obviously, having an MG in a PB that can cover the mined bridge is a good proposition. However, the closer to the action you place the pillboxes, the easier it is for the Canadian to destroy them in the limited time they have following their stream crossing...and that just might lose you the game.

Lastly, it is important that the German player keep at it until the very end. It can be demoralizing to see the sheer mass of Canadian firepower lay waste to your key defensive positions. But time is very limited, and it doesn't take many German units to tempt (or force) the Shermans into fighting instead of exiting. Similarly, so long as pillboxes remain vulnerable to AVRE, the Canadian has a chance even if they lose most of their Shermans.



The Canadians

Strengths: AVREs, Firefly, FP, Morale, Smoke
Weaknesses: Time, VC

The key to this scenario as the Canadian is to protect your Shermans and avoid a tank fight. The goal is to exit Shermans, not kill Panzers. Although a gaggle of Shermans looks formidable, only the Firefly can easily kill the German tanks. It is critical to understand that the Firefly is a defensive weapon due to the fact that its armor is no better than that of the other Shermans. Its 76LL MA can prevent the German player from being too bold with his tanks but it cannot move into the LOS of a stationary German tank without risking its life.

As soon as the AVREs have dropped their fascines, their 200mm MA becomes the tool of choice for clearing the mines...and anything else in LOS. It is also important to plan how long it will take for you to use the fascines, if you will use them and where you will use them. You may need to risk having your AVRE go CE or risk a little ESB to get into position with time to spare. Finally, remember that the AVRE can level a Pillbox with a single shot...you just have to get close enough to hit the thing.

Another important Canadian asset is the infantry. These guys are ideally suited to cross the stream and search for the AT Gun and mortars that may be HIP towards the north or west. The infantry can also clear the mines, especially in the first two turns, given sufficient SMOKE cover. They can also tie up German infantry in order to peel open the defenses at a critical point and allow the Shermans to roll through. If you are lucky enough to retain some SMOKE beyond the first turn or two, use it to get these guys into CC with the outnumbered Germans...especially those pesky crew-manned ordnance weapons.

Finally, the Canadian must use SMOKE. Shermans, infantry and mortars all have the ability to obscure the German player's units. Shut down firelanes with Smoke. Allow your infantry to cross the stream with Smoke. Obscure areas likely to contain the AT Gun with Smoke. It will probably run out before you want it to, but while it lasts, Smoke will be your best friend.

The German knows exactly where you need to go, how long you have to get there and what needs to survive (Shermans) in order for you to win. The map will let you maneuver quite a bit to avoid a frontal assault if you so desire. However, the end game will be a dash for the goal line...let's hope you've knocked off enough anti-tank assets to make that dash successful. Have fun!

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No Crying In Crimea [MP9] Notes by Bryan Earll / Matt Cicero

Background and Development

No Crying in Crimea was conceived two years ago, a result of two occurrences. Bryan had been reading about the fighting withdrawal of the German 17th Army in the Crimea in an excellent book, *Ostfront 1944*, when

he and I decided to conduct a whiteboard exercise on the top ten factors that make a scenario great. Filled with thoughts of maneuver, difficult strategic choices and optimal usage of available resources, Bryan disappeared into his house and did not emerge for some weeks. Well, maybe I am a little fuzzy on the exact details, but before long, I was being ushered into his living room to behold a table set up with six desert boards barely discernable beneath a sea of Russian and German counters.

In the beginning, the scenario accurately depicted a force of Germans fleeing a much larger force of Russians across a vast nearly-featureless steppe. The Germans had a big convoy of wagons and troopers fleeing down a road across all six boards. In addition, there was a second force of slightly more capable Germans who were also mounted on horses and wagons who were supposed to move a ways onto the board and then set up blocking positions for the convoy. There was a lone Russian FB harassing these formations. The main Russian force, surprisingly, was not too different from the final version. The tanks were a bit heavier but otherwise, they were similar in size, quality and firepower. Not even the three German FBs that appeared in this first version could stop the slaughter. In fact, we found that if the Germans did nothing but run, enough could get off the board to win the scenario. Sadly, if they stopped and fought, the Russian tanks killed every last German on the board. The only thing the Germans had going for them was that the troops setting up to defend were 467s with a rather decided range advantage over their 458 counterparts.

So, we made a few changes. The Germans got to set up on-board but lost most of their transports. The convoy was dissolved. Essentially, we shortened the game a turn and eliminated the easy retreat option for the Germans. Result? The Russians slaughtered the Germans in every playtest. Again, the Russian infantry were getting killed while the Russian tanks were obliterating the weaker, retreating force of Germans. Mind you, the German Big Guns were the same throughout our playtesting...an interesting note considering how much more important they became as we massaged the scenario through its various iterations.

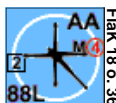
So we made a few changes, tried them and made some more changes. I have to admit, I have never spent so much time working on so big a scenario. Thankfully, the early versions did not last much past the first three turns. Anyway, we altered a few things. The Germans were forced to spread out, the 467s became 447s and the 447s got some foxholes. The retreating Germans were beefed up in numbers and acquired a 50L AT Gun. The Russians lost their heaviest armor in favor of the ISU-122s. The Air Support dropped from 2 Russian FBs and 3 German FBs to one for each player. Why? Well, the FBs were not just killing the retreating troops, they were stopping them cold with residual. The heavy-armor tanks were unkillable by the 88L AA Guns. The

Russian infantry had yet to have an impact on the game...it really seemed like a complete side show to the tank vs. fleeing infantry turkey shoot.

About this time, we hit a wall. The scenario had drifted from Bryan's initial concept and he wasn't happy. I was banging my head against the wall wondering how to get all the units back into the fight in a meaningful way. And so we set the scenario aside. The funny thing was that except for two final adjustments, the Orders of Battle at this point were those that would make the final scenario card!

A few weeks later, I showed up at Bryan's and offered an idea. We bashed it around, each feeding off the other and eventually came up with the last couple tweaks that made *Crimea* shine again. The tweaks that came of that evening of brainstorming included: 1) we set the Russians up onboard and equidistant from the center of the exit area to allow for a closer start to the defenders and the victory area; 2) we replaced the retreating German force with a retreating Romanian force, greatly reducing firepower and removing PFs; 3) we changed the Victory Conditions to allow for the counting of dead and captured Axis troops as well as Russians making it into the victory area as well as the negative effect of escaping Romanians...encouraging the Axis player to more carefully consider throwing away troops to preserve the Romanians; 4) we allowed the Germans to setup their troops as they wish (not forced to spread out) but they were restricted to a band of hexes surrounding the exit area; and 5) we got rid of the German 9-2 leader who had single-handedly done more damage than any other counter in the game. These changes made it a whole new ballgame. Now, the Russian could tee off on the Germans with a variety of strategies. The Germans could set up a defense in any fashion they desired. Both were encouraged to preserve troops and yet both had to engage closely to win. The scenario immediately took on the look that Bryan had originally envisioned...a force of weaker troops with wagons desperately trying to escape through a small force of defenders dug in and covering their retreat, backed up by some dispersed but deadly Big Guns, being assaulted by a huge, powerful, elite force of Soviets hell bent on destroying everything before them.

No Crying in Crimea is at its best when two players decide they are going to play a long afternoon of ASL, set up the defense a day ahead of schedule and then enjoy the ride. It is very exciting for both sides and permits players to try a wide variety of tactics. It is rather forgiving of mistakes and bursts of lopsided dice. I think you'll enjoy the opportunity to blaze away across the steppes!



The Germans/Romanians

Strengths: HIP Guns, Entrenchments, SWs
Weaknesses: FP Range, Broad Front, Morale

The Germans begin with a number of advantages. Whatsmore, they have a large degree of control over how best to use these advantages. The setup of the tank and 4 guns insures that these weapons will be somewhat spread out. However, a crafty German player will quickly discover certain positions that provide good fields of fire across a large portion of the board. This is especially important for the PzJg III/IV and the 120mm MTR. The tank destroyer has a LL gun which can kill anything it hits. It is very effective at very long ranges so the farther back you position it, the larger it's field of fire and the less likely someone will be

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able to return fire effectively. The 120mm MTR has a 12 hex minimum range...best to keep this one backed up or those Russians will get under his fire envelope and scoop up an easy 4 VP. The twin 88L AA Guns have turrets and so they can be positioned where they are likely to catch victims in groups, even if they are not all in the same CA...a more central location may prove best. The disadvantage to this gun is its TK. A 20 TK is very likely to kill either Russian tank but that frontal 14 AF can sometimes deflect a deathblow, especially at range where the TK starts to fall off. The key to success with these units is to place them where they will be able to smash the Russians without having to swivel or adjust on their first shot. It is shocking to see three of your tanks explode in one round as the Russian when moments before there were no German heavy weapons in sight.

HIP is powerful. Know when to drop it and fire. I've seen two philosophies on this subject. The first is, start firing as soon as you have targets...don't let the Russian tanks belch Smoke and blast your infantry or you will lose the game. The second is, fire after the Russian FB leaves the board...why expose yourself to the only unit that can effectively target you early in the game...especially the thin-skinned tank destroyer. Personally, I like to shoot early and often figuring the sooner the Russian loses his units, the sooner the pressure starts to let up. So I'll drop HIP on at least one AA Gun as soon as possible. The tank I tend to baby, waiting till the Russian halts his tanks to line up a deadly shot or two at maximum TH.

Given the placement of the Big Guns, the next challenge as the German is to arrange your infantry. I tend to like clusters of troops, each with a leader and a few MGs, spread in a rough semi-circle on either side of the road. It is really hard to figure out an ideal position for these guys so I'll toss out a few rules of thumb from my experiences. Plan on using your MGs to lay intersecting firelanes...nothing slows the Russians better than 1 -2 shots and 2 -2 shots all along their axis of advance. Plan on where you want routing troops to hunker in order to rally and make sure your leaders are nearby. Plan on digging more foxholes, especially if the Russian uses a lot of Smoke initially (hey, what else are you going to do while he runs up behind the clouds?) Also, plan to deploy as many guys as you can. This serves two purposes since it allows you to create more free foxholes at setup and it allows you to even out your counter stacks a bit so as to hide the location of your SWs. And let me again note how incredibly valuable those foxholes are to the defenders...+2 terrain versus -2 terrain for Russians on the move.

With initial locations decided, think about two other factors before you finalize your positions. First, think about how long you want to occupy these positions. Will you stay and fight to the bitter end while the Romanians run for the rear? Or will you bug out early and set up another line of defense? Second, think about how the German setup dovetails with your plans for the Romanians.

So let's turn to the Romanians. Man, these guys have it tough. They are barely out of range of the Russians at the start of the fight. A small portion of these guys can be on the faster (and very vulnerable) wagons. Their firepower range stinks. And there is a very angry FB hovering overhead. The only thing going for them is that they have two very big guns and two ROF 3 weapons. Ok, a -1 leader does help, also. The big decision for the Romanians is how you want to use them...as exiting VP or as additional defenders. This is a tricky decision. Exited Romanians work against the Russian VP total (even the wagons are worth 1 EVP!). Ro-

manians that stay not only don't count as exited, they can also be killed or captured and so help the Russian further! My take on this conundrum is to do a little of both. Have the HMG, MTR and two 150 Guns try to join forces with the defending Germans and bolster their lines. Man, those 150s can really be a pain if they can unlimber and start firing! The HMG gives the defenders two ROF 3 MGs and the MTR, though weak, can smash troops in the open with its ROF 3. The -1 leader is icing on the cake. Meanwhile, the majority of the squads dash for the goal line stopping only if they are out of LOS to dig a few foxholes for the front line defenders to fall back to, if necessary. Also remember that Romanians can use German weapons without Captured Use penalties...that might prove really useful if a German AA gun loses a crew and a lone Romanian crew is nearby to take over!

Overall, the German/Romanian player has a pretty effective force to delay and whittle away at the Russian horde. A few weaknesses do kinda glare, however. Russian troops have a range of 5 which is longer than the German and Romanian troops. Also, the initial setup has to cover an attack from anywhere along the Russian start line. This tends to cause a certain spreading out of the defenders. Finally, morale is a factor...not only in how often you will break but also how often you will rally to fight again. If you can manage to get troops back on their feet again, you are far more likely to win.



The Russians

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Big MAs, Elite Troops, Smoke, VC
Crossing OG, German FB, Time

If you ever wanted to play an enormous elite Russian force, you've come to the right place. This scenario was designed with the idea that the defenders would get pulverized. And with a '44 FB, four T-43s, four ISU-122s, two IAG-10 AA Trucks, three mortars, three MGs, two dozen 458s and a small pile of leaders (including a 9-2)...you've got the troops to do some serious pulverizing.

The Russian player has a lot of tactical flexibility in what he can do. His tanks have big "L" MAs that can use Area Target Type to devastating effect across multiple boards. Nothing like dropping a 120mm shell on a foxhole using Area Target Type for a 12+2 shot at a range of 25 hexes! Better yet, how about those Romanian wagons and troopers fleeing in the open? The 76LL of the AA Trucks is devastating at ultra-long ranges using ATT. Of course, if you are going to use the tanks in this fashion, then you will need to set them up on the start line with minimal hindrances between you and your likely targets. Of course, that means a crafty German may have his HIP guns in just the same positions to do the same to you! Nevertheless, this may be the one game you fire more ATT shots than ITT shots due to the Russian red TH numbers and the relative openness of the terrain.

The Russian tanks may also be used to support the Russian infantry by laying Smoke. You'll have to decide if those circled B11 ISU-122s are better saved for killing things or for belching tons of Smoke with their s9 (Elite, remember!). That Mild Breeze can really make things fade from view and give your Brown Horde the extra oomph they need to make it to close range without dying in droves. Of course, the T-43s can be up and supporting the attacks, waiting till the Smoke clears to pound some poor foxhole with MGs and MA to prevent any last minute heroics. They could even race to the rear around a flank and cut rout paths and chew up troops with encircling fire. One thing is for

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sure, if Russian tanks spend any significant time behind the German/Romanian front, the game tends to slide quickly into the hands of the Russians. The Germans must be able to fall back and regroup and the Romanians must be able to escape to have a chance at victory. Of course, that's why there are two German "88s" and a very mean Nashorn hiding behind the lines...hoping a T-43 will make a dash for glory around a flank.

The Russian infantry are no slouches, either. If you need to cross open ground, I can't think of anyone better than an 8-morale trooper. The trick is to carefully watch the range to the German main lines. You can effectively close without too much suffering from MGs and MTRs and align yourself at a range of 9 or 10 hexes in order to use some serious fire-grouping to smash strongpoints without receiving any return fire from those 447s. You have enough mass to smash through anything the Germans can set up...except intersecting firelanes. I've seen 15 squads go down in a single turn trying to dance through five firelanes. Instead, take your time and concentrate on knocking out those German MGs before you need to cross the last bit of open ground. You have enough MTRs and MGs to do some serious damage so make sure these get set up and start firing early. Use the crews to man these immobile assets and free up squads to make the assault. Mr. 9-2 on overwatch might just be able to clear a few foxholes for the Boys in Brown to waltz right in. And don't forget about those LMGs and ATRs as wagon-killers. Those little buggers are worth 1 VP each so take them out when you can!

So what has been the most effective way to employ the Russian assets? From what I observed and experienced, the best plan was one where the Russian was able to use Smoke and careful maneuvering to isolate one section of the German foxhole line. He then pulverized it with the majority of his infantry and broke into the backfield with his T-43s. The Russian FB was best used to slow down the retreating Romanians and to take out their best assets...the 150 Guns and the HMG. Finally, the German HIP assets were neutralized with Smoke (to protect the T-43/Infantry assault) and Area Target Type (from the ISU-122s and the MTRs). Of course, the FB was also used to take out 88s when given the chance but I felt that relieving the pressure on the Romanians was a mistake. If it wasn't for a random 1+1 shot during one of my games, I would have had a 150 INF Gun facing the side armor of two T-43s at less than 10 hexes. Yikes! In the end, the Russian wants to destroy and capture as much as he can in a piecemeal fashion while preserving a few tanks in the victory area. Smashing one flank while obscuring the rest of the defenders worked very well towards this end. Hiding tanks so that they had LOS to their targets but were not in LOS of the Big Guns was very effective also.

The Russian must overcome a few considerable challenges to succeed. There is a lot of open ground to cover before the Russian infantry reaches the main defensive lines. Even with Smoke, firelanes can still kill. Practically anything can kill if there is no Smoke. 1-1 shots add up over time and when those shots are 2-2 or better, troops sometimes don't get back up. Another issue related to this is rally terrain. There isn't much and what there is usually has a German MTR dialed in on it. Finally, if Russian tanks are doing a good job of skulking, you must expect that the German Big Guns will open up on your troops. That can be horrible. Another challenge is the German FB. Although it shows up late, it can be rather effective at stopping an attack in its tracks or knocking out a few key tanks. One of the best ways to overcome

this challenge is to get those AA Trucks in AA Mode! Well...that's what they were made for! Add in the HMG and you may just knock that pesky fighter down to the ground. One last considerable issue is time. The Russians have a long way to go to reach the victory area. It is unlikely that killing and capturing Axis troops will give you enough VP to win. That means, you must get some troops and/or tanks into the victory area. When you set up, count the hexes and you'll see just how fast you need to go each turn to make it.

ERRATA ALERT!

On the Cheat Sheet, the TK numbers for the **8.8cm FlaK 18 (AA)** should read: **AP TK: 20, HE TK: 8, APCR TK: 23**



Tripwire [MP10] Notes by Chuck Hammond

Background and Development

Tripwire began as a historical scenario in the same way that *Hill 621* began as a "historical" scenario: one that does not depict any one action, per se, but instead seeks to portray the *kind* of action that was taking place all along a given front at a particular time. To that end, I initially designed the scenario based on memory. You know the story – you've read it a thousand times – all along the front line of the Battle of the Bulge there were small but feisty American units doing whatever they could to stem the tide until the weather cleared up and the Army Air Force, in concert with massive reinforcements of armor and infantry, could put a halt to the last German offensive. So that's where *Tripwire* derives its name. It is a scenario intended to depict a small force of Americans that is just large enough – and just determined enough – to take the momentum out of a strong German attack.

Of all the actions in the European theater, 'Wacht am Rhein' (what the Germans called the battle) interests me the most, in part, because of the impressive array of new (mostly German) equipment that made its debut there including the Arado 234 jet bomber and the Panzerkampfwagen 251/16 halftrack armed with duel – say it with me now – duel flamethrowers! Man, that one sure brings out the game geek in me. It was also the first time the Germans deployed the flamethrowing Hetzer (officially known as the *Flammenwerferpanzer 38t*) and it was this vehicle that I was just dying to include in a scenario. So, initially, I did...and playtesters were very enthusiastic. The only problem occurred when a couple of playtesters asked, casually, for the historical background. Well, I hurriedly dug through every Bulge narrative I could get my hands on, looking for an equivalent action while trying to stall for time. At long last, I found it: a description of a remarkably similar action – a very critical one, no less – but alas, with different tanks. I contacted Hans Wijers, author of *The Battle of the Bulge: Holding the Line*, to make absolutely certain what kind of armor the Germans deployed in the Battle of the Twin Villages (as the action at Krinkelt-Rocherath is sometimes called) and found out through him that although there is no record of any flamethrowing Hetzer being used in that particular battle, the attacking force did introduce a new Jagdpanzer there, the JgdPz IV(L) – basically a JgdPz IV with increased frontal armor. The other tanks the Germans employed, the author went on, were the Panther and the good old PzIVJ.

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I was both apprehensive and delighted; if I exchanged the Hetzer with the JgdPz IV(L), would the scenario still play as well or had I (to say nothing of the playtesters) expended all this time and effort for nothing? I passed the new version on to Robert Feinstein, who – though sad to see the Hetzer removed – was nonetheless willing to give the revised scenario the old college try. He did, and the AAR he produced midway through the game was fantastic: it was the first time I had seen an electronic, illustrated after-action report. He and Eric Johnson played the new version and it came down to the wire. After a few more fine tunings playtests, *Tripwire* was declared "in the can".



The Americans

Strengths: High ROF, Fortifications, SMCs, HIP
Weaknesses: Morale, Armor; Outnumbered

There are a few decisions the American player has to make right off the bat. First, the American has three M60 mortars. He may, therefore, exchange them for a Battery of 60mm OBA (per the Ordnance Note). The advantages and disadvantages of this are clear. On the one hand, OBA denies a lot of space to the German who has a lot of open ground to cover. On the other hand, 60mm OBA cannot be fired as Harassing Fire and, like all OBA, it is subject to the whims and vagaries of Battery Access, Radio Contact, the status of the Observer, etc. Assuming he chooses to trade the light mortars for OBA, the American must now decide whether to equip his Leader with a Phone or a Radio. If he gets the Radio, he can move around, the Radio Contact number is an 8 and he would Maintain Contact on a 10 (per the Ordnance Note). Not too shabby. If he chooses the Phone, however, the Observer would be *automatically* HIP, immune from Sniper Attack while HIP and make and keep Radio Contact on an 11 or less. On the downside, the Observer would be unable to move around and less able to rally American units while trying to maintain HIP.

If, however, the American decides to keep the mortars, he must be extra careful about where he deploys them due to their weight (5PP). If the firer becomes broken and flees, the mortar is left behind. In many of the playtests, the American decided to retain the mortars, hoping to take advantage of the 3 ROF and the fact that the Germans, at some point, will have to move through woods and be vulnerable to airbursts. Believe me, it is no fun to sit under the noel trees, being hammered by a 4-1 attack, again and again. There are measures the Germans can employ to mitigate the effects of this terrifying ordeal, but they all slow his advance.

The second big decision for the American: should he place pickets relatively close to the German in order to slow him down? This is another two-sided coin. First of all, the Americans do not have that many squads to spread around. Second, Interrogation is in effect and any prisoners the Germans might take could squeal, rendering useless one of the American's main advantages: HIP. Third, this scenario has a sudden death VC and prisoners are counted *immediately* toward the Germans VP total. My advice to the American is to practice preventive medicine: don't put too many units – if any – near the very front.

Let me inject a brief interlude here to get on my ASL soapbox for a second. I am a big, big advocate of Interrogation and wish it were a Standard rather than an Optional rule. Why? Because in the vast majority of ASL scenarios there is little, if any, incentive to take prisoners. Most of the scenarios published these days, it

seems, declare the double VP prisoners to be NA. "So why take 'em?" I ask. Playing ASL, you sometimes get the impression that the Germans and Americans took a grand total of maybe 5 prisoners over the course of the entire war. Prisoners were taken for a reason. Not only did the taking of prisoners give your own forces a reasonable chance of surviving the war should they be forced to surrender, the interrogation of prisoners provided both sides with a major source of intelligence about the enemy's intentions.

Back to the American. The 9-2 with the .50 cal is a no-brainer. But where should they go? And again, the .50 cal is a sweet weapon, but it is heavy (5PP). You don't want that falling into German hands, so you want to place it somewhere where you can bug out before the heat gets too great or at least somewhere where you stand a reasonable chance of recovering it.

The Germans have a lot of open ground to cover, which means: intersecting fields of fire (some of us old timers still remember the advice given to us in the original SL rulebook, along with the illustration). Set up your MGs appropriately.

What to do with the hero? Either he becomes a Siamese twin with the 9-2, producing that awesome -3 modifier, or he gets sent out to do the dangerous stuff with the BAZ, perhaps HIP. You could even give him the .50 cal – hey, he can fire it to full effect, and he never cowers – it's worth considering.

Finally, there is the matter of HIP. The Americans, you will notice, are allowed to HIP 3 *Units* (and any SW they possess). Many playtesters took this opportunity to HIP the Tank. That's a good way to keep it alive and keep the German guessing. Long-time PTO players will be happy to find that not only the AT Gun, Crew, and 3 Units are allowed to set up HIP, but the Fortifications themselves may set up (and remain) HIP if placed in Concealment Terrain. A couple of evil, crafty playtesters exploited this opportunity to place the tank inside a Trench, and the Trench inside Concealment Terrain, yielding a HIP (i.e. initially immune to Sniper attack) OT tank with a serious ROF 2 MA and a 360° MMG mount HD in the woods (giving it that extra +1 mod on the German's TH attempts on top of requiring the German to achieve a Turret Hit in order to destroy the tank). Now that's good thinkin'.



The Germans

Strengths: Armor; SS Troops; Smoke
Weaknesses: Armor; Crossing OG

The German's main advantage – his armor – is also a potential weakness: any vehicles destroyed make the VP total he must attain that much more difficult to achieve. In many scenarios, you can throw away a vehicle – especially when your armor outnumbers that of the enemy by 3-1. However, in this scenario, the German vehicles are not scouts. The German player must not only hold on to them but use them actively if he is to emerge victorious. And there's the rub – how can he use his armor against the American without exposing it to too much fire? The answer is for the German to expose only his frontal armor to the American, and preferably from distances greater than 6 hexes to avoid Deliberate Immobilization attempts.

The German will be happy to find that all of his units – not just the 658s/348s – suffer Replacement as if they had an Underlined Morale. So if they ELR, they will split into two half-squads but not

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go down in quality. The ELR of ALL German Infantry (incl. the Assault Engineers) is 3, so they *will* ELR. The fact that they Deploy rather than drop in quality will be appreciated when the German breaks in the open (as he will inevitably do) and be forced to Low Crawl toward the tree line. As soon as he is no longer under the effects of DM, he will have a reasonable chance of rallying. A lot better chance, in fact, than if his 447s had reduced normally to conscripts!

The German should use Smoke and use it liberally. Because he is SS (and therefore Elite), his Smoke Ammo Depletion numbers go up by one. Once the 81mm mortars are in position, they can create quite a smoke screen. In addition, he has a lot of sN at his disposal – and you never run out of that. Make plenty of Smoke with your vehicles in the MPh. This protects not only the vehicles themselves but the infantry which advance behind them. Of course, the German Winter Camouflage also comes in handy here since it allows him to advance, concealed, in the open. Finally, the 658s and the Assault Engineer are all capable of producing Smoke – heck, the Engineer gets it on anything but a 6! So do not squander those opportunities to create your own cover!

Speaking of cover (and lack thereof), be sure to advance into woods when possible – do not move (or even Assault Move) through it (unless you are sure the American cannot fire at you). If you advance into it – retaining concealment, of course – the American will get only his Prep Fire shots at you (with hopefully very little ROF) and the worst part (airbursts) will be behind you as you move out the following turn.

The German should also attack along a wide front. Do not make it easier for the American by allowing him to channel and bottleneck your advance. Give him the initiative this way and you sentence your men to certain death. Spread out!

Finally – and it goes almost without saying – take prisoners! They count toward your VP Total and may provide you with much-needed intelligence about his HIP/Concealed units and fortifications!

Well, those are all my comments for now. Enjoy the scenario!



Vulcan's Forge [MP11] *Notes by Matt Cicero*

Background and Development

Back in April of 2003, Bryan Earl and I were discussing the upcoming Cinco de Gringo One-Day event to be held that May. I wanted to try to do something different, something in addition to the fun tournament already

planned (theme: flame-producing stuff). The answer was *Vulcan's Forge*.

We tossed around a few ideas before deciding on one. We wanted to create a scenario that allowed different pairs of guys to sit down and play each other for a single Game Turn. To make it interesting, we decided to give each side fresh troops each turn and to give them fun units...essentially burly-men, no-wimp forces with toys.

We needed a map...and Red Barricades came to mind almost instantly. From this beginning, we fleshed things out a bit more...I thought we could have a clash between the biggest, meanest troops Germany and Russia had to offer with huge tanks, Assault Engineers and lots of things that made fire. We looked over the RB map and based on some past experience in a game of Last Bid, we chose the area of play. Platoons of troops were devised for each side to feed into the struggle. We had lots of 838s and 628s and FTs and DCs and the big-ass German 150 tank and the Russian OT-34 and Mol-Ps and all the RB rules. Well, it served its purpose for Cinco de Gringo, though there wasn't much left on the board when all was said and done!

From these humble beginnings, I began to massage the scenario into something a bit more balanced and coherent...something that might be enjoyable as a real scenario rather than a On-Day event gimmick. I felt one of the most important elements necessary for the scenario's success was tension...right from the start. The struggle portrayed was typical Stalingrad. Troops worn out from prolonged fighting had to hold ground against a determined counterattack and hope that their reinforcements would arrive in time. And so, to create and hold that tension, I used three ideas...the counter by counter initial placement; the numerous and powerful reinforcement groups; and the relatively split board configuration (that gully mid-board really cuts down on lateral movement). Playtesters found that they were already nervous as they started to set up their counters, one by one, with three raging HtH melees in the middle of the board! Who knew how those would turn out? Where should I be strong...in the big factory or in the buildings to the south? Should I tee off as the Russians? Should I skulk as the Germans? It was all very fun to see how each person attacked this problem...and dealt with the rising tension.

What we found was that tension was definitely there and that each player, upon obtaining a new set of reinforcements, really felt that they had the upper hand while their opponent felt that they were about to be overwhelmed. Unfortunately, a few issues arose over balance. We found the Germans had far too many 838s that were just smashing all the Russian troops they could get their hands on. We also found that the OT-34 was just too powerful...and fast...lots of toasted Germans all over the battlefield. Finally, we found that though they were fun, Rooftops tended to take more from the game than they gave. Once a side gained the Rooftops, enemy reinforcements tended to die or be delayed so much that the tide turned. Besides, I wanted this game to be about in-your-face smash-mouth Barricades, not "shoot-em on the starting line" arms-length crap! Bryan liked the Rooftops very much but in the end we made the change. He still grumbles occasionally about Rooftops and I swear I've heard the word "sewer" tossed in as well...

So, I tidied up the actual units involved to lock in the historical perspective. We tidied up the various reinforcement platoons to make them equally attractive and interesting. We also tidied up the special rules in play (Sewers disappeared even sooner than Rooftops...Bryan's only comment was a pained expression and a deep sigh)...with a special thanks to Cloyde for noticing that everyone had been placing the Russian ART Gun illegally. All we had left to do was make sure either side could win. It was pretty tough, but in the end, we relied on one thing...the playtesters. When we started to hear the same number of folks yelling "the Germans kick ass" as "the Russians are unstoppable" we figured we'd hit paydirt.

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I find that *Vulcan's* is a scenario that really molds itself to an individual's tactical preferences. No matter how you enjoy playing ASL, *Vulcan's* lets you do it and still win. You get to set up and add reinforcements in a way that really lets you play to your strengths (as either side). I think this element of the scenario gives it a very high fun factor.

Vulcan's also has very high replay value thanks to the initial setup and reinforcement mechanics. Every game will be different and in each new game, you can attempt a new strategy to win. Our playtesters tried winning by taking the big factory. They tried to capture a chunk of the buildings in the south. They tried to hammer one spot in the line. They tried to push forward on all fronts. Lots of different methods...with some very interesting results along the way.

Strengths and Weaknesses

I started organizing this section like the other scenarios' Notes...by trying to differentiate each side's strengths and weaknesses. I realized that I was repeating myself a lot. Each side benefits from nearly identical strengths and equally apparent weaknesses with minor variations on the theme. So German Assault Engineers have better Smoke exponents than their 628 counterparts. So Russians in factories are Fanatic. So German Platoons tend to have a bit more firepower than Russian Platoons. So the Russian has access to more tanks. In the end, I decided to drop the usual Strengths/Weaknesses format in favor of a discussion covering a few general pointers about playing *Vulcan's Forge*.

The Russian needs to make some big gains initially and set up against the inevitable German counterattack. It is hard for the Russian to regain momentum once it is lost in an area.

Both sides should use the initial placement of counters as an opportunity to not only set up their strategy to win but also to mislead and/or counter their opponent. The Russian has the advantage in that he will always have more counters to place and thus will have one or more extras at the end of the sequence that the German cannot counter. Holding out a squad or two or the FT could dramatically swing the concentration of force for the Russian. The German, however, can cut down on this disparity by deploying his squads. Two deployed squads (11 initial squads gets you up to 4 HS) will give you two extra counters. And yes, the concealment counters are really meant to blunt the Russian initial attack and not to provide dummies. In fact, the concealment counters can turn a weak position into something a bit more challenging if they can be placed near the end of the setup sequence. Oops, did that 20+3 shot just drop to an 8+3 shot? Gee, sorry...

Each side enters its reinforcements anywhere on its board edge. That allows you to send troops where you think you will need them. This can be tricky, especially if you are pressing on all fronts...it is hard to shift position across the gully if you make a mistake. Each side has the same distance to travel to reach the midpoint of the board but a wise player will realize that the more one player presses forward, the closer he gets to the enemy's reinforcements. Additionally, since it takes a full turn to move the reinforcements up, the guys you place today will likely be in battle tomorrow...that delay can be critical so think ahead.

The Guns and vehicles can serve a variety of purposes. I have seen guns in the big factory providing a nasty bumper against

onrushing infantry and I have seen guns which remain hidden nearly the whole game just to intimidate and restrict movement. I have seen guns deployed in a reverse slope position to guard buildings and I have seen them placed on the front line to smash the way into buildings. Remember the Russian ART Gun is far less restricted in its setup thanks to SR#3. Also remember that the Mol-P crews can revive that ART Gun if its original crew decides to take a breather...nothing like having that 76L come back online in time to smash a late-game assault or an unfortunately placed German tank.

The tanks available are powerful in many roles. Players have used them to secure a flank or to cover the middle of the board or to drive up and blaze away at enemy infantry before "freezing" them to facilitate an assault. The StuG tends to dominate whatever feature it acquires with its 150 cannon while the KV can roam pretty much anywhere and not fear a deadly side shot. My favorite, the "conga line", can really tear up the Germans and draw fire depending on how aggressively it is employed.

Breaching interior factory walls may be very valuable to cut down on bottlenecks. It may also allow powerful stacks of defenders to see into even more critical areas that were previously safe. Choose wisely which walls you want to demolish with those DCs.

Given the need for the Germans to counterattack and win back ground, they have slightly more leadership than the Russians. The Russians, meanwhile, have to be very careful not only about how to use their leadership but also about where to send those three precious men. And yes, lurking in the backfield to rally men has often led to death via sniper...best to keep something nearby to soak off the hit.

The biggest issue we found while playtesting was that players tended to win if they planned from the beginning which Locations they intended to capture (or recapture). Also, games sometimes were decided early if initial setup was done poorly...there just was no way to recover. Otherwise, the constant influx of reinforcements almost exactly where you need them tended to keep both players in this meat-grinder of a game till the bitter end.

Lastly, since several questions came up more than once during playtesting, I wanted to provide some guidance here. The Germans may place counters directly into the HtH Melees during setup since the melees are all in the German Initial Setup Area. This adds such units directly into the HtH Melee...there is no ambush roll or CC combat. Taking this one step further, it is conceivable that if a squad was added to a HtH Melee, it could then be covered with a concealment counter. The Factories on the board include the following buildings: L39, O40, S43 and, of course, U33. Remember that these buildings have ONLY a Ground Level Location in each hex since Rooftops are not in play and factories do not have Cellars. This is important, especially during the Russian's initial setup. Remember the ELITE status of ALL units and thus the increased Depletion numbers. As noted on the Cheat Sheet, ELITE status has NOT been figured into the Depletion Numbers listed on that sheet. Remember the benefits of being an Assault Engineer...from increased Smoke Exponents to improved CCV numbers. Also remember that RB Cellars are in play and which buildings have them.

ERRATA ALERT!

The German *Starting Forces* should contain two "?". Some scenario cards did not have these counters represented on the card.

(Continued on page 12)



A Worthy Adversary [MP12] Notes by Chuck Hammond

Background and Development

Unlike *Tripwire*, *Worthy* was a historical background that inspired a scenario rather than a scenario in search of a historical background. I found my inspiration in an excellent book on the Battle of Kharkov, which depicted this

strategic Allied defeat from the Soviet perspective in impressively minute detail. Having found the specific battle I wanted to reproduce, I realized that the action would allow me to include features in ASL that aren't always in play. There was dueling air forces, AA capability on both sides, Russian Commissars, a towed AT Gun on the offense and infantry of varying quality (the Soviet player sees it all, from Conscript right up to Elite).

The actual battle also included some rare weaponry. Well, "rare" is not really accurate. Ever notice that some weapons were not rare at all in World War II but for some reason are rarely seen in ASL? One great example is the Russian 37L AA Gun. Right off the top of my head, I cannot remember having seen it in any scenario other than *The Citadel*. According to the Chapter H notes, the Germans used "large numbers of captured pieces...to equip their own FlaK units" (Russian Ordnance Note 25). The Soviets produced this very successful design in such numbers that the Germans were able to equip their own forces with large numbers of the weapon! The Rarity Factor is 1.2. Yet you virtually never see it in ASL. As fun as that weapon is – effective against aircraft, armor and infantry – there was no way I was going to allow this opportunity to go to waste!

Worthy is quite different than *Tripwire* in many significant ways, yet shares a number of similarities which should give players an impression of the kind of scenarios I enjoy most: combined arms, limited forces on the defender's side, reinforcements to the rescue (assuming the defender can hold out long enough) and . . . fortifications! Not too many fortifications, but enough that they act as a force multiplier. This gives a scenario that "chess-y" feel I like so much. I smile with glee when both players agonize over a lot of moves – and not because the players are necessarily the (to put it nicely) *deliberative* type by nature – but because they are faced with a challenging tactical dilemma at every turn. I know in my own experience that these are the scenarios I remember most. If you are the kind of attacker who likes to just throw your forces in the direction of the defender in the hope that something will break through, you will in all likelihood not enjoy *Worthy* because your forces will be slaughtered en masse. The scenario is simply designed that way.



The Russians

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Commissars, Fortifications, HIP
Unit Quality, Limited Mobility, FP

The Russian has a few decisions to make as he sets up his defense. First, he must decide whether or not to trade in leaders for Commissars. Having at least one Commissar is critical. Though many players are loathe to give up the negative modifier, they ought to consider trading in the 8-1 as well as the 8-0 because the Russian defenders will break and a single Commissar will be in no position to run from one side of the battle to the other in an effort to rally someone. The Stukas prevent that.

The Russian player must also assume that his forces will be virtually immobile throughout much of the beginning of the game thanks to the German air superiority. He must be very, very careful to make sure all of his MMC have a path of egress during play because he will need to make those troops last and last and last. And he needs the Commissar(s) to bring insufficiently reliable Communists back from the brink!

What he must try to avoid, of course, is capture. Capture in a Chuck Hammond scenario means Interrogation! If the prisoners spill the beans, the Russian defense can become compromised. The chances of this occurring are greatly increased if he decides to place his Conscripts on the front line as "speed bumps". If the German should capture them, he will receive a -2 modifier on the Interrogation roll (-1 for Conscript, -1 for Full Squad). The Russian is counting on his HIP units to keep the German guessing (and therefore hesitant and slow) before the glorious arrival of the Red Air Force. If the German finds out what is where before Turn 3, the Russian is in big trouble.

Turn 3 is the decisive turn. The Russian player must make a difficult decision here: either enter his reinforcements early and face the wrath of the Stukas or voluntarily forgo his reinforcements for an entire Game Turn so as to give his own considerable air assets time to tie up – and hopefully eliminate – the German dive bombers. Depending on the way the game goes during the first three turns, the Russian player may find he has no choice but to face the music.



The Germans

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Firepower, Leadership, Stukas
Time, Victory Conditions, Air Battle

The German has got to go in there, kick some ass, and kick it fast, because time is not on his side. Though he has awesome firepower at his disposal, once the Russian reinforcements come on board and his Stukas are being shot down one by one, it starts becoming a different ball game, particularly in light of the unusually steep victory conditions. He has to control every multi-hex building. That means he will – to some extent – have to spread his forces out, weakening their local numerical advantage.

With the Stukas, he must decide whether to use the bombs against the Soviet infantry or save them to confront the Russian reinforcements. However, he does not even know whether the Russians will enter their reinforcements on Turn 3. When attacking the Russian infantry, close proximity to his own units could lead to disaster. Several times during the various playtests, this led to Mistaken Attacks! So a word to the wise: be very judicious about those Stuka attacks! Finally, do not forget that not only your bombs but your cannon is an effective anti-armor weapon. Even the mighty T-34 stands a decent chance of being destroyed. Don't shortchange yourself and depend on bombs alone to do the trick.

Note that the German is allotted a pretty nice AA Truck. If he parks this in the right place, he has a decent chance of bringing down the Yak when it starts conducting Ground Support attacks. The Truck is, of course, extremely vulnerable, so you might consider keeping it off the playing area – or even off the board – until the appropriate sector has been cleared of Ivans. Ditto for the sIG (aka "Mr. 150") and the AT Gun/Kübelwagen.

(Continued on page 13)

("Design Notes" Continued from page 12)

The Assault Engineers are key since they are mobile Smoke machines (receiving it on a dr of 4). In concert with the tanks, this Smoke can provide a great deal of critical cover for your men as they cross those streets. Never miss an opportunity to place Smoke where it will serve you best! Remember also the mod Assault Engineers receive when they conduct CC vs. tanks – they are just the right men to forcefully disassemble that pesky T-40 once it is discovered!

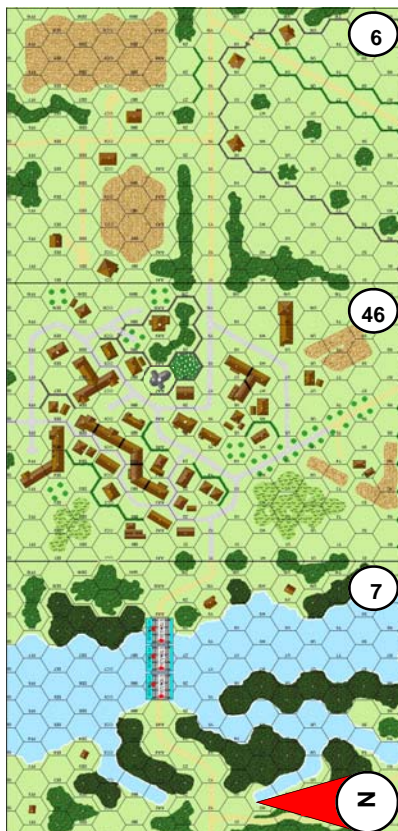
That AT Gun may not look like much but it is, potentially, a very powerful anti-tank weapon. It not only has a sweet 3 ROF but also a HEAT projectile (max range: 9) whose To Kill Number is equivalent to that of a Panzerschreck (26!). Not too shabby for 1942!

Finally: Capture and Interrogate. Save yourself a lot of grief by offering that poor Conscript a cigarette, some warm chow and friendly conversation. In his gratitude, he might let slip a secret or two. Remember that when you conduct CC against a Conscript, it is easier to Capture him (referring to that cherry -1 mod) than to kill him.

Now move out!

ERRATA ALERT!

The Board Numbers and North Arrow are missing from the map image on some scenario cards. They should be present in the following configuration:



Melee Pack II

Battlefield Integrity

Battlefield Integrity (A16) is a terrific optional rule that rarely sees the light of day in typical ASL play. All official and most 3rd party scenario cards sport the bracketed numbers on the Turn Record Chart that indicate the Battlefield Integrity values...that is, the total number of MMC BPV in the starting OB for each side. There are two questions that come readily to mind concerning Battlefield Integrity:

Why isn't it used more?

Well, BI tends to get overlooked for two main reasons. First, if a scenario sports less than 10 squad equivalents in either starting OB, BI cannot be used. Second, you have to keep an accurate track of casualties throughout the game...and that means recordkeeping of some sort.

What is so fun about BI?

Realism. Replacement is a part of the game that has less of an impact the higher the ELR of the troops. So how fun is it when lofty ELRs start to tumble to the level of mere mortals and mediocre ELRs drop to terrifyingly low values...all thanks to BI. Watching troops dissolve due to ELR failure as more and more of their fellows meet their maker certainly injects a bit of excitement into a game. It isn't an overbearing impact on the game but it does make you think twice about sacrificing any MMC.

The Battlefield Integrity values didn't make it onto our scenario cards for Melee Pack II...so we thought it would be fun to list those values here, just in case you were interested!

Guerra En La Selva [MP7]

BI N/A

Ecuadoreans have < 10 Squad Equivalents

Crater Lake [MP8]

BI N/A

Germans and Canadians have < 10 Squad Equivalents

No Crying In Crimea [MP9]

Germans/Romanians: [200]

Russians: [300]

Tripwire [MP10]

BI N/A

Americans have < 10 Squad Equivalents

Vulcan's Forge [MP11]

Germans: [250]

Russians: [220]

A Worthy Adversary [MP12]

Russians: [90]

Germans: [178]

SWEET!...OUCH!

Tie-Dye Shirt:

\$5

Angels Baseball Cap:

\$20

Giant 6+1 Counter to
put the Whammy on
Schilling:

Priceless

"This is me at Game 1 of the American League Divisional Series (Angels vs. Red Sox). There's me with a HUGE Schilling Counter. Behind me is Mr. Ankle himself. My jinx may have worked, but not good enough!"

-Sean Geraghty



Upcoming Events...

11/30/04: WCM VIII Pre-Reg Kits Available
12/04/04: "Let It Snow!" N-S Challenge 1-Day
01/10/05: Hit The Beach! V9N4

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